

Agricultural Commission Meeting

April, 13th, 2010

Small Ones Farm – Amherst, MA

Members Present: Wm Levine, John Thibbits, Pat Wagner, Sally Fitz, Touria Eaton, Jaime Tidlund, Ruth Hazzard

Minutes: The March 9, 2010 minutes and March 25, 2010 Farmer Breakfast minutes will be approved at the May 13, 2010 meeting

The April Agricultural Commission meeting was the first of several meetings dedicated to the development of an Agricultural Commission work plan.

Sally used the online Handbook for Agricultural Commissions to address the group with ideas on how to approach the meeting and how we should go about developing a work plan. The members then took the time to come up with a list of ideas about what they feel is important for the Agricultural Commission to deal with or address. Attached please find this list.

Agricultural Commission 2010 Work Plan

Group A. (Red)

1. More connection between Agricultural Commission and farmers
3. Develop, communication link with farmers
7. Set up communication mechanisms with farmers to address specific needs, eg newsletter, speaker services, forum
16. Communicating to farmers. Re resources available from state and fed (\$ other)
30. Connect teens (young people) with farms that need labor – work/learn/service

Group B (Purple)

2. Encourage local business and markets to buy products from local farmers
10. Grow public awareness of farming through community events
15. Grow and buy local food (Ag products) educate the public on the benefits
17. Promote Ag-based econ. Development opportunities in town. Benefits for all

Group C (Blue)

4. Develop, education programs for public and farmers (different for each)
8. Educate the public about benefits of ALL kinds of farming
9. Farmer Education (eg rules on labor, other topics farmers need)
13. Action and education on wetlands encroaching on farmland
14. Educate school children about agriculture, connect Agricultural Commission/farmers to schools
27. Work to broaden home gardens and community gardens

Group D (Green)

- 5. Collaborate with the full con. Comm
- 23. Develop partnerships with other groups (CISA, etc.)
- 28. Strengthen links with other board's liaison/attend
- 32. Increase awareness of Agricultural Commission among town boards

Group E (Dark Blue)

- 6. Help organize winter farmers market in Amherst (define "Amherst" farmer)
- 18. Farmers guide of Ag products available. All kinds compost, food, repair services, hay for public and for farmers.
- 19. Reform the Saturday farmers market (change!) what markets do, why expansion could be good
- 20. Farmers market issues
- 24. Map of farms and farmstands and product guide
- 25. Establish cold storage and processing facility
- 31. Help town establish farmers market that helps more Amherst Farmers sell year round

Group F (Highlighted)

- 11. Preservation of farmland vs. conservation vs. open space (urgent to avoid loss)
- 12. Encourage new farmer entry (land access, young farmers)
- 21. Establish efficient Ag. Comm. Operations: membership, change structure (sub committees) educate members on issues, update contact list, meeting format, handout/handbook
- 22. Classification of town owned land
- 26. Water / sewer charges for Ag land / livestock use
- 29. Health care access for farmers and workers and insurance